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ABSTRACT

This report is an analysis of data collected by a special project which surveyed issues and resources in teaching undergraduate sociology. The data was collected from a questionnaire mailed to a sample of 682 chairpersons of departments of sociology in universities, colleges, and community colleges. The overall response rate was 65%. The questionnaire focuses on the curriculum, emphasizing six issues: boundaries of the sociology curriculum, ways concepts are presented, the introductory sociology course, teaching methods, the curriculum for the sociology major, and the role of the departmental and faculty objectives. The results include the following. Sociology departments have defined their boundaries as amorphous territories in which they share, negotiate, and compete with other departments. But despite this lack of a firm boundary, sociology feels confident of its ability to communicate the nature of sociology to students and its place in academic institutions. Central to successful teaching is the development of a conceptual framework, not the work of the discipline or department, but of the individual teacher. Instruction in sociology still relies heavily on textbooks, readings, and conventional testing, although awareness of and experimentation with new technologies is widespread. One surprising result is the absence of problems. Satisfaction is more widespread in undergraduate sociology than would be expected. (Author/RM)

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ON TEACHING UNDERGRADUATE SOCIOLOGY

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ISSUES AND RESOURCES IN UNDERGRADUATE SOCIOLOGY CURRICULUM

REPORT TO RESPONDENTS

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Although most sociologists spend the greatest part of their professional careers teaching undergraduate students, the organization of the task within departments has rarely been critically or systematically examined, the needs of sociology teachers have generally been neglected, and the consequences of curriculum design and change have been infrequently discussed by the profession. Since 1974, the American Sociological Association Section on Undergraduate Education has been working to change this situation by developing programs and resources to aid individual teachers and departments wanting help with teaching. From early discussions within the Section on Undergraduate Education, a project was proposed to develop resources and stimulate interest in undergraduate teaching, and it was subsequently supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The Project responds to the belief of the Section that the sociology profession must initiate reflective discussion of issues in curriculum and teaching, and that systematic efforts must be begun to develop resources and alternative models for the construction of curriculum and courses.

This report is an analysis of data collected by the Project in a survey of issues and resources in teaching undergraduate sociology. The focus is the curriculum which we take to be more than simply the list of courses offered by the department. As Daniel Bell said in his discussion of the Columbia University general education program,

> "Writing a curriculum, like cooking, can be the prototype of the complete moral act. There is perfect free will. One can put in whatever one wishes in whatever combination. Yet, in order to know what one has, one has to taste the consequences. And, as in all such acts, there is an ambiguity for evil, in that others who did not share in the original pleasures may have to taste the consequences. In sum, it is the moral of a cautionary tale." (Bell, 1966)

This report, too, is a moral and perhaps cautionary tale reporting the way different educational ingredients are combined, mixed and savored by sociology departments throughout the United States.

Several surveys of the sociological curriculum have preceded this one. Beginning in 1902 a number of assessments of the course offerings of sociology departments were made (Tolman 1902, Bernard 1908, Chapin 1910, Kennedy and Kennedy 1942, Podel , Vogelfanger and Rogers 1959, Bates and Reid 1971, Reid and Bates 1971). These early studies helped contribute to the definition of sociology as an academic discipline and charted the growth of course offerings.

This study both continues and broadens the thrust and direction of the earlier studies. First, the area of inquiry has been expanded from course offerings and the sociology major to issues relating to curriculum design and resources for teaching. Secondly, community colleges have been included in the sample. Their importance in undergraduate education cannot be ignored, numbers alone demanding recognition. In 1974, community colleges enrolled nearly 2,200,000 degree credit students and are predicted to enroll over 2,800,000 by 1984 (Simon and Frankel 1976). Finally, the data collected by this survey

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complements the data from two other surveys conducted by the Project to provide data on issues extending well beyond the curriculum. The first set of data was collected on "teacher development activities," and the report on that has been completed (Ewens and Emling, 1976). A final survey on the "institutional context" in which undergraduate sociology is taught is now nearing completion.

There are also precedents for this report in other disciplines. Some teaching assessments came in the wake of substantial criticism. In the 1950's and the 1960's, after the shock of "Sputnik," mathematics and the physical sciences closely examined their teaching from kindergarten to graduate school, revising and reforming both curriculum and teaching methods. Other departments have undertaken evaluation in the wake of considerable success. For example, psychology launched a study of its undergraduate curriculum in the early 1970's (Kulik, 1975) from a position of considerable success, psychology granting more baccalaureates in 1975 than any other social science discipline: 51,436 compared to 31,817 for sociology.

The evaluation of the sociology curriculum stems both from feelings of failure and success. On the one hand, some would argue that the increasing number of social problems during the last decade, such as race riots, student protest, busing, economic depression, continuing poverty and discrimination, and the crises of the cities demand more effective effort from sociology. On the other hand, sociology has experienced continued growth during the last several decades, and it continues to have better professional opportunities than many disciplines. In either case, a careful analysis of sociology curriculum offers substantial rewards as has been demonstrated by the efforts of other disciplines.

CURRICULUM AND CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOCIOLOGY

A traditional definition of curriculum is that it is a selection of certain items from the body of concepts, theory and knowledge produced by a discipline, arranged into courses, courses organized into sequences with requirements, prerequisites, and statements of educational goals. But the set of rationale or strategies underlying the selection process are also part of the curriculum. Thus, planning a curriculum is both a process of selection and the development of a rationale or strategy for the selection, arrangement, and organization of courses.

The curriculum should not be confused with the discipline; they are separate, distinct, but related entities. The curriculum represents only part of the body of knowledge, and serves alternative goals such as training in liberal arts which differs from disciplinary training. However, the problems and nature of the discipline are indirectly reflected in issues of curriculum writing. For example, the diversity of subjects studied in the discipline create problems for the construction of a manageable curriculum and the multiplicity of conceptual frameworks complicates the selection of course content. Thus, the development of sociology curricula reflects problems emerging from the character of the discipline and leads to a wide variety of successful and legitimate solutions.

This report discusses six issues relating to the nature of the sociological curriculum, each crucial to the organization of a department, each open to debate and argument, and each generating alternatives and requiring decisions, either implicitly or explicitly. In the first section, the way a department

determines what constitutes the appropriate subject matter to be included in its offerings of sociology courses is discussed. This is the problem of boundaries of a curriculum. The second issue to be considered is the way concepts are presented within the department's curriculum. From these general issues a third concern is addressed -- the nature of the first course which introduces students to the discipline and remains one of the most problematic courses for departments because of the great variety of student interests which must be met. The fourth topic deals with the techniques of teaching used by faculty in sociology departments and the tensions between innovation and traditional methods. Then, the fifth issue continues by assessing ways individual courses form a curriculum and how students progress from the first course to graduation with a sociology major. Finally, the role of departmental and faculty objectives are considered in terms of the overall structure of the departmental teaching effort. The report will deal with these topics in order to provide base line data on what is being done in sociology departments and provoke thought about what might be done.

DATA

The data were collected from a questionnaire mailed to a sample of chairpersons of departments of sociology in universities, colleges and community colleges. Included were all those departments listed in the Guide to Graduate Departments of Sociology 1976, published by the American Sociological Association (ASA), a systematic (one in five) random sample of 192 four-year colleges from the ASA list of 4-year colleges offering sociology, and a systematic (one in five) random sample of 236 community and junior colleges drawn from the Community, Junior and Technical College Directory, published by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC). The sample totaled 682 departments located in every state, and included the same institutions surveyed by the other two project groups studying teacher development resources and the institutional context. In the following report, the responses of community colleges and four-year colleges were weighted by sample factors to provide accurate summaries covering all institutions.

The questionnaires were mailed in July, 1976, and during the next eight months, three followup letters and two additional questionnaires were sent to non-respondents. The overall response rate was 65% and thus provides, with only a few exceptions, quite reliable results. Response rates were 77% for university departments, 67% for four-year departments and 50% for community colleges.

The low response rate from community colleges is typical, but still disappointing. Contacting community colleges is made difficult by the variety of organizational structures, the frequency of social science divisions rather than sociology departments, the existence of multiple campuses and branches administered by a centralized office, and the lack of a public list of chairperson names. In order to overcome these difficulties, letters requesting the name of a chairperson or an individual responsible for teaching sociology were mailed to deans of instruction in each community college in the sample. Over 75% of the sample responded with the name and ultimately 55% of these institutions returned the survey questionnaire, a response rate only slightly lower than the university and college sub-sample. In general, schools not responding with a sociologist's name were small and often did not offer sociology courses. Questionnaires addressed simply to the "chairperson" were sent to these institutions and obtained only a 19% rate of return.

This initial report will not attempt to provide a detailed summary of responses to all the items in the questionnaire, nor a complete discussion of all issues. A complete set of data is available in a report titled, DATA REPORT: ISSUES AND RESOURCES IN THE UNDERGRADUATE SOCIOLOGY CURRICULUM, by Ted Bradshaw and Sharon McPherron, available from the American Sociological Association Teaching Project, Carnegie Library, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH 44074. Respondents may receive the report at no cost by mentioning their participation in the survey while others should remit $2.00.

In the DATA REPORT, percentage responses to every questionnaire item are reported by six categories of institutions: large and small universities, large and small four-year colleges, and large and small community colleges. These data could be used by departments and faculty to compare their responses with those of similar institutions, to study alternatives as a department anticipates curriculum revisions, and to provide a checklist of questions or issues which can be utilized for departmental curriculum discussions. Further analysis of these data will be undertaken during the next year and will appear in a variety of journals; their availability will be announced in the Project Newsletter and reprints may be obtained by writing the Project at Oberlin College.

I
DEPARTMENTAL AND DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES

BOUNDARY ALTERNATIVES

The first issue effecting the presentation of a sociological curriculum arrives because sociology, in both its disciplinary content and its organizational struture has a relatively undefined and ambiguious content, which is reflected in unclearly defined boudaries between sociology and other disciplines. There are those who argue that sociology is the "queen of the social sciences," encompassing and integrating research in a wide range of areas, responding to relevant and timely issues. However, there are others who maintain that sociology is exclusively the study of forms of social organization in modern societies, carefully fixing clear, definite boundaries between itself and other disciplines. Many sociologists occupy one of enumerable positions in the ample space between these two stances. Thus, for most sociologists, the distinction between sociology and other social sciences is a controversial, if not an impossible, issue to resolve. Nevertheless, this is not a purely academic debate: departments must make curriculum decisions about courses that are within their domain, teachers must define sociology for students, and students must comprehend some definition of the discipline. The content of courses, the courses in the curriculum, and sociology's relationship with other departments are all influenced by the way disciplinary boundaries are set. There are several ways a department might

articulate the character of the boundaries between itself and other disciplines. The questionnaire presented four alternative boundary definitions to chairpersons whose responses are shown in Table I.

TABLE I

ALTERNATIVE BOUNDARY DEFINITIONS FOR SOCIOLOGY CURRICULUM

	Departments (%) Ranking Statement "Important"	Department (%) Ranking One Criterion As Statement "Most Important"		
	Total Sample	Univ.	4-Yr. College	Community College
Sociology has a distinctive approach and perspective which is used to study subjects also studied by other disciplines.	62	49	48	32
Sociology has a core content which is clearly sociological but many courses overlap other disciplines.	46	22	19	20
Sociology has a fixed and distinctive content which differentiates it from other disciplines.	31	6	12	11
There are no inherent boundaries between sociology and other disciplines. What we teach is due to historical developments or institutional politics, not the unique character of sociology.	10	2	3	6
No Response	*	21	15	30

* No response for total sample for above questions = 4%, 3%, 5%, & 6% respectively.

The first and second most frequently selected boundary definitions were "sociology has a distinctive approach and perspective which can be used to study subjects also studied by other disciplines," and "sociology has a core content which is clearly sociological but many courses overlap other disciplines." One or the other of these two positions was selected by about two-thirds of college and university departments, and half of the community colleges. These choices reflect the existence of a "negotiating space" between sociology and other departments which may be reflected in rapidly changing boundaries, interdisciplinary courses, etc. On the other hand, there was only weak support for the two statements that "sociology has a fixed and distinctive content which differentiates it from other disciplines," and "There are no inherent boundaries between sociology and other disciplines." What we teach is due to historical developments and institutional politics, not the unique character of sociology." These two statements, one of constriction, the other of ambiguity, narrow the negotiating space. From these results, we become aware of the tremendous importance of boundaries within the institutional context for sociology departments.

CROSS-LISTED COURSES

The selection of boundary criteria which encourage permeable and negotiated boundaries with other disciplines leads to courses in which responsibility is shared between a number of departments. The questionnaire listed nine courses which are often taught by sociology and other departments. Courses which early studies had shown to be clearly sociology's were not included. Departments were asked to respond by indicating courses that were taught by sociology, courses that were in other departments, and courses that were taught by both sociology and other departments. If a course was cross-listed, the respondent was to answer in terms of the department which had primary responsibility for the course.

Of the courses listed, sociology has primary responsibility for marriage and the family courses, with 73% of the total weighted sample offering it. Similarly, exactly 60% of the departments offered ethnic studies, black studies or race relations. Over one third offered organization theory. But fewer of the departments in the sample (26%) offered courses in sociology of education; 28% in women's studies; and 32% in again and problems of the elderly. Child development was offered by 15% of the departments.

However, when the list of courses is examined from the perspective of what courses are most likely to be offered by sociology and a second department, the two most frequently shared courses are social psychology, taught by the two departments in 27% of the cases, and statistics, taught by two departments in 23% of the cases. Furthermore, when these two courses are taught by only one department, that department is not likely to be sociology; in the case of social psychology, 27% of the institutions offer it in a department other than sociology, compared to 16% in sociology, and in the case of statistics, 38% of the institutions offer it in a department other than sociology compared to only 7% exclusively in sociology. Examining the data from universities alone, social psychology is more frequently shared with 67% reporting the course taught in two departments. The same pattern is also true for statistics with 59% of the university departments having also offered it in other departments.

In the case of social psychology, course boundaries between the disciplines of sociology and psychology seem to mirror the position of the specialty in the discipline. The lack of an organizational framework and an organized voice within the ASA has plagued social psychology for some time. The concern of the discipline about sociological social psychology research occupied twenty pages of a recent issue of the AMERICAN SOCIOLOGIST. In that issue, Alan Liska argues that there are problems in course content, the absence of text authors, and research. He says, "To summarize, the dissipation of social psychology directly observable in the citation patterns of sociologists doing social psychology, may also be reflected in the recent content analysis of leading sociological journals, the content and paucity of social psychology textbooks authored by sociologists, and the apparent lack of concern by psychologists for the work of sociologists." (Liska, 1974:4).

INTERDISCIPLINARY INVOLVEMENT

Sociology's amphrous boundaries do create a structural conduciveness for interdisciplinary programs. Indeed, sociology departments are actively involved in interdisciplinary programs. While only 16% of the departments reported no involvement in interdisciplinary programs, 39% reported it was either "completely" or "generally" descriptive to say that they were.

The most interdisciplinary activity was in four-year colleges where 46% reported that they were actively involved, reflecting the traditional commitment of the four-year college to liberal arts and the emphasis on integration of knowledge. In contrast, 38% of universities and 32% of community colleges were this involved in interdisciplinary programs. In community colleges with organizational structures such as social science divisions and behavior science departments which restrict opportunities for narrowly disciplinary activities, interdisciplinary activity could flourish. But, unexpectedly, these data show that community colleges have the least interdisciplinary activity. It may be that in the case of the community college, the need to maintain identity in a structurally confusing situation is stronger than the desire to innovate with boundaries (Stein,1977).

SOCIOLOGY COMES OF AGE

Despite the history of sociology as a new discipline, sociology seems to have come of age in academic institutions. Only 14% of the departments described themselves as marginal, threatened, and/or misunderstood. Departments felt confident about their ability to teach and participate in new program development in their institutions. When new programs were developed, 76% of the departments felt that sociology's participation would not be blocked by other departments, and 53% of the departments reported they felt they could offer any course they wanted and felt competent to offer. Thus, blocks to developments of new courses come from outside the departments, institutional restraints of budget, facilities, enrollments, rather than from sociology's rivalries or relationships with other departments.

The soul-searching of the discipline for boundaries apparently is not communicated to beginning students. No single department chairperson was willing to completely agree with the statement, "after completing their first sociology course, students expressed concern that they can't distinguish sociology from the other disciplines." In fact, 68% of the respondents indicated that the statement was <u>not</u> at all descriptive of their department. Although it is possible that department chairpersons are not in touch with student perceptions, we think not. Criticism of the curriculum does reach the chairperson, particularly in the four-year and community colleges in which the chairperson is the first court of appeal when students are unhappy. The percentage of agreement is even higher in these departments than in universities where the chairpersons are undoubtedly further removed from undergraduate student complaints.

With declining student enrollments and concern about them, it is to be expected that departments would compete at their boundaries for courses and students. The survey results indicated that competition at the boundaries does exist, and that it develops conflict on occasion. This is not an isolated or infrequent event, but characterizes 25% of the departments in the weighted sample who reported that during the last five years they had been involved in a dispute or misunderstanding with other departments over course offerings. Sometimes these disputes were minor misunderstandings, but in other cases, the dispute could not be resolved and neither department offered the course.

As one might logically expect, the majority of the reported disputes involved questions of "turf" with other human science departments, most often psychology. Social psychology was the most frequently reported area of controversy; estimates indicated this course is a matter for dispute in about 10% of the cases. The next largest problem area was Marriage and

Family, mostly involving home economics but occasionally a psychology department. Political science departments were involved in disputes about deviance, criminal justice type courses and political sociology. Other institutions reported human sexuality or initmacy courses as areas of disagreement involving biology, psychology and the school's curriculum committee. Less frequent disputes concerned urbanization, aging, sociology of education, sociology of sports and recreation, courses in technology and society, minorities and third world studies.

Universities with their larger range of courses and programs were the most likely institution to have disputes: 37% of University departments reported occurances compared to 27% of colleges, and 18% of community colleges. Fewer disputes in the four-year colleges could possibly be explained by the college's greater effort to be interdisciplinary and the minimal disputes in a community college may be the result of less rigid departmental organization. For example, in a community college behavioral science department, students in social psychology are still in that department, whether social psychology is taught by a psychologist or a sociologist.

In summary, sociology departments elect boundary definitions which create significant "no man's land" between themselves and other departments. They flatly reject boundary stances that would clearly delineate sociology from other disciplines or which disregard boundaries. The boundary definitions are consistent with the data that report a significant number of shared courses, participation in interdisciplinary programs, disputes over courses, and competition for students. But despite disputes and competition, sociology seems confident of its position among academic departments, and whatever the ambiguity felt by the discipline, it is not shared with students.

II

THE ROLE OF CONCEPTS IN TEACHING AND CURRICULUM

The second issue in sociological curriculum involves the need to establish better conceptual foundations for undergraduates. The overwhelming response of the departments in the sample to questions about the place of concepts in the curriculum indicates that concepts are enormously important to teaching. Of the departments responding, 35% found considerable, and 42% moderate, agreement with the statement, "If a student learns a concept well then we have done the most important part of teaching sociology." The responses followed a similar pattern in reaction to a parallel statement, "One must be conscious about the importance of teaching concepts in sociology." Considerable agreement was expressed by 41% and moderate agreement by 47% of the respondents. Four-year colleges were somewhat more likely to agree (44%) than universities (31%) or community colleges (36%).

In stark contrast to the testimony of importance of concepts to teaching and curriculum is the unwillingness of departments to operationalize this essential component of teaching. When asked if the department had a list of concepts which should be taught in the first course, 87% replied no; when asked about other courses, 80% replied no; and when asked about concepts expected to be mastered before graduation, 93% replied no. There are many reasons for the absence of a list: the youth of sociology, the variety of paradigms, the fear of infringement of academic freedom, and the stulification of proscription. But, the survey data indicate that in addition to these

reasons there is a lack of agreement among faculty about the way concepts are elaborated and sequentially arranged as a student progresses through the curriculum. The departments were asked to respond to the statement, "Faculty here are in agreement about how concepts are elaborated and built one upon another as students progress in the department." A negligible number (7%) indicated that the statement was completely descriptive, while only 40% could respond that the statement was even generally descriptive.

The next concern is the source of materials for teaching in concepts. When asked about texts as a source of information, only 4% of the department chairpersons responded that it would describe instruction in their department to say that "we rely on texts for the presentation of most concepts." Another 36% of the sample replied that it would be generally descriptive, while 55% of the sample answered that it would only "partially" or "not at all" describe instruction in their department. The lack of trust of texts for the presentation of concepts, particularly given the importance of concepts to teaching, is disturbing given how texts dominate all instructional media in the first course and other courses as well.

If texts are not used, perhaps faculty help each other develop better methods of teaching concepts. However, survey results show that during faculty meetings, the importance and methods of teaching concepts were discussed infrequently; only 23% of the respondents found a statement to that effect completely or generally descriptive. The conclusion one can draw is that if texts are untrustworthy, and if there is little discussion about concepts among faculty, each faculty member must rely upon their own resources to prepare material, relying on their own training, understanding and reading. In this case, the teaching is only as good as the teacher. Teaching concepts, then, is a highly individualistic experience.

Thus, while concepts seemed to be the key to teaching well, or the rod by which faculty and departments measure successful teaching, disagreement about sequence, distrust of text, lack of discussion and a general unwillingness to operationalize the teaching of concepts still exists.

III
THE FIRST COURSE

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Virtually every sociology department in the United States offers introduction to sociology or principles of sociology as the first sociology course for students, whether the student is to major in sociology or is taking a single course. Regardless of its title, the first sociology course constitutes a vast proportion of all departments' teaching efforts. The sampled departments reported a mean number of 10.8 sections per department offered during the school year 1975-76. On the average, a department enrolled 482 students in the first course, and the average faculty member taught 3.1 sections of the course during the school year. If sociology departments across the country have nothing else in common, they do all share the fact that a large part of their teaching effort is teaching introduction to sociology.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Given the lack of agreement about the direction and goals of sociology as a discipline, it is not surprising that there is a varying opinion among sociologists about the nature and goals of the first course. The questionnaire asked departments to respond to five statements of goals for the first course. The responses are in Table III. Respondents were asked to indicate

TABLE II
Departmental Goals for the First Sociology Course:
Percent Indicating Statement Describes the Goals Well
And Percent Ranking Each Goal Most Accurate by Institution Type

Goals	Departments (%) Ranking Statement "Important"	Department (%) Ranking One Goal As "Most Important"		
	Total Sample	Univ.	4-Yr. College	Community College
We emphasize teaching fundamental concepts which will be needed in subsequent sociology courses.	74	45	39	28
We give students an introduction to the subjects sociologists study.	62	15	12	14
We try to introduce students to a variety of alternative sociological perspectives.	61	16	18	11
We try to help students understand everyday life.	50	5	11	24
We want the students to learn the most important scientifically established facts from sociological research.	26	2	2	1
No Response	*	12	15	19

*No response for above questions = 1%, 2%, 1%, 2%, 2% respectively.

how well each statement describes their department's goals for the first course, and secondly, to select the one statement which most accurately describes their department's goals. The goal which best describes the first course across all institutions is that "we emphasize teaching fundamental concepts which will be needed in subsequent sociology courses." This goal was also selected as most descriptive of the first course in nearly three-quarters of all institutions. This concern with providing a foundation for subsequent study is consistent not only with a belief that there is some structure for the learning of sociology (see Section V-Organization of Curriculum) but reemphasizes the importance of concepts for the curriculum. It is noted from Table II that community colleges rank this goal for the first course lower than the universities or four-year colleges. In the case of the community college this represents increased emphasis on other alternatives as well as the fact that there are frequently no subsequent courses that students might take. Thus, it is reasonable for community colleges to place less emphasis on building conceptual foundations even though many students will transfer to other institutions. Likewise many students in introductory courses in universities and four-year colleges will never take another course in sociology. Also, it might be reasonable that other goals should be emphasized there.

Another goal for the first course is to provide students with a sampler of the variety of perspectives and subject of sociology. These two goals reflect the plural nature of sociology -- its multiple perspectives, concepts, and substantive areas. The responses to the survey indicate that many of the departments feel that either introducing students to the subjects sociologists study (62%), and to a variety of sociological perspectives (61%), describes well their goals for the first course.

In contrast to the enthusiasm for presenting students with a sample of sociology, most departments were less enthusiastic about presenting first courses which either emphasized "helping students to understand everyday life" or "learning the most important scientifically established facts from sociological research." The attempt to help students understand everyday life describes well the first course in only about one-half of all departments. Few university and four-year college departments indicated this was their most important goal, reflecting their decreased concern for the application of sociology to practical matters. In contrast to the application of sociology to everyday life, departments have not emphasized teaching sociological facts, either. A quarter of all departments feel that this goal describes their program well, and only 2% rank it most important. One would suspect that the community college would rank research findings low, both because of their higher rating of the goals of personal adjustment, and because their faculty is less likely to do research. But even in university departments where most research is done, 2% felt that the statement describes well their introductory course. Thus, one of the earliest criticisms of introduction to sociology, that there is a gap between what is taught and what is known, is still valid. Given the commitment of the discipline to research, the low ranking of teaching research findings documents an ironic discontinuity from priority in the discipline to priority in curriculum.

THE AUDIENCE

The audiences served by introduction to sociology challenge any attempt at uniformity of the first courses. In a number of areas, the first course is required by students in other programs and departments and they constitute a large portion of the department's enrollment. Nursing and social work programs require the introductory course in 51% and 54% respectively of all departments responding to the questionnaire. In 18% of the community college sample and 15% of the total sample, students from these fields comprise <u>over 50% of the students</u> who take the course. Thus, there is evidence that sociology provides a substantial service to other departments and is not simply in the business of providing an introduction directed primarily toward sociology majors.

Although there are many differing goals for the first course, departments generally have not tried to incorporate this diversity into the organization of the course. Very few institutions offer special sections of the first course for students from other departments or for students who are not likely to take another sociology course. Even though 90% of the departments which completed the questionnaire reported students usually took introduction to sociology or principles of sociology, 45% indicated that students <u>could</u> select something other than the usual first course. Some of the options included Social Problems, the Family, or occasionally Criminology, as a first course

while others removed the prerequisites from a large number of courses usually taken in the first two years. Thus, while introduction to sociology is firmly entrenched as the usual first course, there are other options, admittedly unutlized, which introduce variety in nearly half of the departments.

The diversity has not typically been encouraged within the usual first course. Less than 1% of the departments report that students may generally choose texts, assignments, sections and/or modules on the basis of their interest. In contrast, nearly 37% of the departments generally specify a common text or reader for all course sections at their institutions. In addition, 17% report that all sections generally share a common first course examination. The standardization of the first course is an important counter-trend to the admitted diversity of goals across departments. It undoubtedly reflects the pressures of faculty to ease their workload and departments to ease their administrative duties. These pressures are most acute in the community college in which the standardization is more evident. Of the community college departments, 54% generally specified a common text and over 25% share common examinations.

PROBLEMS OF THE FIRST COURSE

Problems surrounding the first course were frequently mentioned to us during the preparation of the questionnaire. In general, some of these problems do appear to be real in many departments. For example, the feeling that students don't receive from the first course what the departments think they should is shared by nearly half of all the respondents, but only 2% thought it was serious. A more substantial problem admitted to by many departments was that students do not have adequate reading and writing skills for the first course. About 25% of the departments reported that this was a serious problem, 57% said that it was somewhat of a problem, while only 18% of the departments said that it was not a problem. This was more acute in community colleges, with 29% saying it was a serious problem. Four-year colleges reported this to be serious in 21% of the responses and university departments reported it in 16% of the responses.

However, survey results suggest that most concerns about the first course may have been overstated. The majority of the sample rejected statements that there were too few liberal arts students in the first course, that the first course was a bottleneck for many students wanting to take subsequent sociology courses, that the first course was not an adequate preparation for subsequent courses, that most faculty feel squeezed for time so that the first course does not receive the attention which it deserves, or that the faculty do not want to teach the course. For example, the latter problem was held to be generally or completely descriptive in 16% of the departments and over one-third said it was not descriptive at all. Department chairs did not portray a first course beset with problems as many would have thought. A different impression might have emerged from the faculty themselves, but as seen from the chair, these data report the first course as healthy in most institutions.

IV

INNOVATIVE TEACHING TECHNIQUES

In the first course, as well as in subsequent courses, the sociology teaching atmosphere is alive with innovations and new experiments to deliver better and more responsive learning experiences. Departments were asked to specify the extent they utilized a list of teaching techniques, and to indicate their awareness of and use of modules, as a detailed case study indicating the awareness of innovations.

As a baseline, the data presented in Table III show that the majority of departments continue to place considerable reliance on what may be called traditional teaching materials such as texts, other books, term papers, ob-

TABLE III

Percentage of Departments Using Selected Teaching Techniques*

	First Course			Other Courses		
	Extensive	Occasional	Not At All	Extensive	Occasional	Not At All
Traditional Teaching Material						
Textbooks	90%	7%	2%	75%	17%	1%
Other books	35%	60%	5%	55%	37%	17%
Term papers	15%	54%	27%	44%	43%	5%
Objective exams	60%	32%	5%	40%	47%	5%
Essay or Oral exams	25%	61%	11%	46%	43%	2%
Established Innovations						
Field experience	6%	66%	25%	18%	69%	6%
Films	19%	76%	3%	18%	71%	2%
Independent Study and Research	6%	63%	27%	19%	67%	4%
Simulation and Gaming	3%	53%	44%	2%	61%	26%
Individualized Teaching Techniques						
College Level Exam. Program (CLEP)	1%	37%	53%	2%	24%	62%
Experiential Learning Exercises (role playing, socio-drama)	7%	63%	24%	8%	68%	16%
Modules	3%	21%	67%	3%	28%	56%
Programmed Learning		21%	72%	1%	25%	62%
Self-paced Study	2%	22%	69%	2%	36%	50%
Equipment Heavy Innovation						
Integrated Use of Multimedia	5%	44%	44%	5%	47%	37%
Televised Presentations	1%	33%	69%	2%	37%	49%
Audio Tapes	3%	59%	33%	5%	65%	19%
Computer-assisted Instruction		18%	74%	2%	31%	56%

No response varies from less than 1% to 9% for individual items

*Weighted Responses

jective exams and written and oral examinations. In the first course, over 90% of departments use texts and 60% use objective exams, the most concentrated use of any of the techniques reported. The use of these techniques changes significantly for subsequent courses in which more use is made of other books, term papers, and essay and oral exams. There are some important differences in the use of the teaching techniques between institutional types. The data,

fully reported in the DATA REPORT, show that the community colleges, compared to both four-year colleges and universities, tend to rely more basically on textbooks, assign other books less often, assign fewer term papers and give fewer essay or oral exams. One exception to the general trend is that the university is the largest user of objective exams in the first course.

The second group of teaching techniques is what we call "established innovations", which include field experience, films, audio tapes, independent study and research and simulations and games. Virtually every department makes use of films; films are used extensively or occasionally in 95% of all first courses and in 89% of other courses. Thus, teachers of sociology are surprisingly heavy consumers of educational films considering that journals offer almost no space for review of films, literature or workshops do not encourage their creative use, and professional meetings do not preview and discuss films. Surely the extensive use of film documented in the survey argues for increasing professional attention to better use of the film media.

Likewise, field experience and independent study are used extensively or occasionally in the first course by a large percentage of departments: 66% and 63%, yet this large emphasis has not generated guidelines for conducting field experiences and designing successful independent study courses. In contrast gaming and simulation used by 53% of the sample, either extensively or occasionally, in the first course and 61% in other courses has its own journal (Simulation & Games; published by Sage Publications, Inc.).

Some differences appear when this data is examined by institutional category. Community college use more films, considerable less independent study and research. Four-year colleges use more field experience and independent study and research than either the university or the community college.

Compared to the use of traditional teaching materials such as texts, established innovations are used much less extensively and more often occasionally. However, it would hardly be expected that a department would use these, or any other innovative techniques extensively, in any but the most extraordinary experimental course setting. Therefore, we find that the sharp drop in extensive use and the increase in occasional is expected. Extensive use falls to even lower levels in the remaining, more innovative, techniques.

A third category of innovation, "individualized teaching techniques" find a modest, but significant levels of use in more advanced courses and minimal use in the first course. These techniques, includes the use of College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams, experiential learning exercises, modules, programmed learning and self-paced learning. Similar results were obtained for the fourth category, which we called "equipment heavy innovations," including integrated use of multimedia, television presentations, audio tapes and computer-assisted instruction. A surprising percentage of departments occasionally use these two categories of innovations which require special teacher skills and equipment. In most cases at least a third of all institutions have teachers using them. Also, there is little variation by institutional category in these last two groups.

From these data, two conclusions can be drawn: first, awareness of innovative techniques, at least to the extent of occasional use, is widespread, and second, the initial enthusiasm for innovations and the heavy financial investment in equipment such as computer terminals, or television has not led to a comination of innovations over all other curriculum considerations. Furthermore, we may conclude from the data that the fear by some that innovative techniques would be used widely to process large numbers of students, displacing traditional teaching methods, seems not to be supported. In addition for every attempt to use mass processing techniques, there are attempts to use individualized learning process.

Many people have hoped that modules would provide increased flexibility within sociology teaching to respond to the diversity of student interests and the ability of the profession to develop materials relevant to these students. Using modules as an indicator of the spread of innovation, departments were asked in a series of questions about their present utilization, future plans and general interest in modules. The data show that 20% of all departments report that they are using or will use modular units "where the learner actively participates in ways other than simply reading, listening, or discussing things in class." Another 31% indicated that they will experiment with these modules. As shown in Table IV, more structured

TABLE IV

Extent To Which Departments Are Interested in Modular Techniques For Teaching Sociology At All Levels

	Will Use or Are Using	Will Experiment	Will Get Information	Not Interested
Units where the learner actively participates in ways other than simply reading, listening or discussing things in class.	20%	31%	23%	15%
Units where objectives are spelled out and tied to evaluation to indicate achievement of objective.	14%	24%	29%	23%
Self-contained packages pertaining to single concepts or units of subject matter which may be separately mastered.	9%	23%	30%	28%
Units which may be used at different rates by individual students.	8%	24%	33%	26%
Self-instructional packages using specially prepared materials.	9%	22%	33%	26%

No response varies from 10% to 11%

module packages received less interest, but none were rejected outright. Thus, there is a great interest in modules, as probably is true for most all of the other innovations, yet most departments have taken a slow, cautious approach to adopting these techniques. The data further suggests that the networks or media which distribute information about innovations are functioning well in sociology and that dissemination of information is not nearly as important as evaluation of the use of innovations or encouragement of its utilization once the awareness or the actual equipment is present.

V
ORGANIZATION OF THE CURRICULUM

To this point, the analysis has concentrated on individual courses and the content, methods and problems of the course rather than the way courses are organized into curriculum for sociology students. In this and the following section attention is turned to the rationales and strategies by which courses are arranged into sequences and to the goals or outcomes of the curriculum. The consequences of each teaching decision are multiplied in the curriculum and thus, the difficulties of teaching sociology courses are seen perhaps in sharper focus in curriculum decisions.

Curriculum decisions have to be made for students who are majoring in sociology as well as for students who take a single course. Nonetheless, the major is the single most important unit for the organization of curriculum in sociology departments in universities and colleges. In university departments the major requires a student to take an average of 10. courses with an average of 4.7 of them specified as opposed to electives. In four-year colleges, an average of 10.8 courses are required with 4.7 specified.

Sociology concentrations or majors are available in only 18% of the community colleges leading to the Associate of Arts degree. The limited number of schools with majors is to be expected, but what is surprising is that overall, community colleges have relatively large and varied programs in sociology, averaging a total of 6.9 different courses in each college. Occasionally, these courses are organized into options other than the major. Our respondents indicated that these programs included sociology concentrations in social or behavorial sciences and human services or social service programs.

The curriculum in most institutions is not a fixed and unchangeable pattern of progression through a program of undergraduate courses, but is subject to change. The survey documents that there is a moderate amount of actual change which takes place in the sociology curriculum across the nation with 15% of the departments reporting recent major changes and 30% reporting minor changes or revisions in their curriculum. From a review of the changes which were described, most of the minor changes are attempts to remain current in course offerings or to adjust offerings to the current faculty interests and competencies. For example, frequently added courses included sociology of health, aging, death and dying, and sex roles. Typical courses which were deleted include social work, public opinions, and demography. Furthermore, many departments made changes in the theory-methodology area and added or dropped prerequisites for advanced courses. Of course, these latter areas are frequently mentioned as sources of problems in the curriculum design at many institutions, and it may be that more attention should be placed on sharing experiences within the discipline regarding these issues.

In general, most institutions reported that it is easy to add courses to the curriculum. The exception is the community colleges where over 40% report that it is generally or completely descriptive to say it is hard to add courses at their institution. Some of the difficulty of adding courses in community colleges comes from the overall limitation of resources for a large variety of courses. In addition, it is typical for community college departments to have to demonstrate that local four-year colleges will accept their curriculum changes. Community colleges report that the requirements of other institutions constitute a major curriculum constraint, felt by 50% of the departments. In contrast, only 15% of the four-year colleges and 14% of the universities report these problems. The constraint mentioned by one university respondent was that transfer students coming to their institutions were ill-prepared and poorly counseled with regard to sociology offerings. Nonetheless, constraints in curriculum change undoubtedly are the source of morale problems in community college departments which cannot respond to the changing needs of those it serves, even though it is called on to enroll increasing numbers of students for their first two years of training.

Thus, the changes which are indicated in the survey do not reflect either the inclination toward or opportunity for a fundamental rethinking of the design and organization of the curriculum. In contrast to experiments with technology, far less experimentation exists with the curriculum. It well may be that improved teaching could be had more economically by careful review of curriculum than by innovation and investment in teaching technologies.

The options for curriculum change involve choosing among a number of different models of the way sociological knowledge is accumulated. Since the curriculum serves a variety of interests and needs of both the student and the college, some set of rationales or strategies must be selected as the basis for ordering courses and content. These patterns of acquiring sociological training

are the source of considerable debate within departments considering changes in curriculum. For this reason, several alternatives were presented to survey respondents. The most frequently selected alternative (52%) is the statement that "Sociological knowledge is relative to the student's career, academic and personal goals. Thus, courses should be structured to meet these goals." This "Pot-pourri" approach reflects the character of sociology as a field in which there is no single line of cumulative knowledge as in some fields, such as mathematics. The second most frequently endorsed option was that "Sociological knowledge can be obtained in any order, just so long as a certain amount is obtained before graduation." This statement was selected by 22% of the deparments as the most important consideration with regard to the curriculum and represents a "full glass" approach to structuring sociological training. The third option, selected as most important by 17% of the departments, suggests that "Sociological knowledge can only evolve from a single entry point and move through a specific set of courses, each building upon the one before it." It is interesting that this "knowledge chain" approach is so weakly endorsed in view of sociologists endorsements of the teaching of core concepts as necessary for subsequent courses and attempts within the educational community to organize curriculum.

Of course, none of these views represent the exact position of any one department, most finding their position somewhere between those which were offered. It should not be concluded because of these data that the discipline of sociology is presented as a random set of offerings for every individual to take as he or she wants. There is order to the discipline in ways which are less visible and which are nonetheless applicable to adaptations relevant to a wide variety of student personal and social needs. Sociology does not hold that there is no theory of learning is relevant to teaching its courses, only that the pattern is so multifaceted that no simple single line of progression is evident.

What, then, are the many alternative needs which are met by the curricula of sociology departments? Table VIII shows the response of different types of institutions to question about the component goals of a curriculum. The most fre-

TABLE V

Components of an Undergraduate Curriculum: Percent Indicating Absolutely Essential to Their Department

	Univ.	4 Yr. College	Com. College
Development of critical thinking	47%	53%	35%
Sociology's contribution to an overall general education	45%	47%	30%
Development of cultural awareness	27%	36%	38%
Mastery of a body of sociological knowledge	22%	37%	18%
Training of professional social scientists	10%	16%	13%
Facilitation of personal growth	7%	19%	24%
Development of student creativity	6%	14%	11%
Satisfaction of diverse student interests	6%	8%	17%

quently indicated goal for the undergraduate curriculum is the development of critical thinking in students. This is followed by an emphasis on sociology's contribution to an overall general education and the development of cultural awareness among students. These general goals are more important than a mastery of information particular to sociology itself such as the mastery of a body of sociological knowledge and the training of professional social scientists.

Finally, sociology departments in the mid-1970's are not particularly prone to emphasize the goals of those who called on education to facilitate personal growth, creativity and diverse student interests. Thus, there remains a strong predisposition among sociology departments to respond to the goals of general education rather than what used to be called "relevance" or individual fulfillment. This does not mean that departments feel the latter is "definitely not desired" -- virtually no department responded this way and about one in ten of the departments responded that these goals were "not important."

The ranking of goals as "absolutely essential" varies less by institutional category than expected. It would have been reasonable to suppose that community colleges would rank personal growth, student creativity and student interest higher, that four-year colleges would be distinguishable by ranking general education, cultural awareness and creativity high, and universities would separate themselves by ranking high critical thinking, training of professional social scientists and mastery of a body of sociological knowledge. But all three institutional categories cluster in their rankings: general education, cultural awareness and critical thinking are everyone's first three choices; personal growth and mastery are usual fourth and fifth choice, followed by creativity, student interest and professional training clustering having the least acceptance. Thus, in an area where disagreement between faculty in different teaching settings is expected, little real conflict about the relative ranking of goals is discernible. Perhaps the goals are intrinsic to sociology, the discipline, and not to the educational setting.

In terms of the curriculum, then, there is no single organization that meets the needs of any single, let alone sizable, group of institutions. The curriculum remains in sociology a "pot-pourri" of individualized units designed to meet a wide variety of needs. The astounding thing to recall from the data is not the lack of focus within sociology but the vast array of alternative goals which the departments are trying to meet. It may be useful for sociology departments to clarify their objectives and to communicate what they are trying to achieve to other departments within their college and other schools within their area. This leads to a need for clear specifications of the department's goals and objectives.

VI
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

There is increasing pressure in many institutions for departments to specify their goals and objectives in written form, and to measure the adequacy of departmental programs relative to these goals and objectives. This is consistent with the general trend in higher education toward accountability but at the same time may reflect a consensus that a rational set of goals and objectives improves teaching and provides guidelines by which administrative decisions can be evaluated.

Two objections are typically raised to the goals and objective setting process: that departments will be subject to abuse via their own statement of goals and objectives, and that institutional philosophy will restrict autonomy of the department's statements of goals and objectives. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a statement which read, "The administration will likely impose unacceptable demands on the department if we develop a set of formal objectives." Only 1% of the department chairpersons strongly agreed, 13% expressed moderate agreement, while 77% expressed disagreement. Chairpersons were asked to comment on how well the following statement described their department, "This college has an educational philosophy which leaves little room for a department to develop its own objectives." Of the departments responding, only 3% indicated the statement was completely descriptive, 8% generally descriptive, 34% partially descriptive, and 52% rejected the statement as not at all descriptive. Thus, neither of the two common objections to setting specific goals and objectives were actually perceived as problems by departmental chairpersons.

The educational literature argues that the setting of goals and objectives improves teaching and the majority of sociology departments agree. The survey probed sociologist's perceptions of the value of the goal-setting process by two questions. The respondents were asked to express agreement or disagreement with the statement, "Specific educational goals will improve the way individual faculty teach sociology." Agreement was strongly expressed by 21% and moderate agreement by 53% of the sample, leaving 18% expressing moderate disagreement and only 2% strong disagreement. But when asked, based on their own experience, if departments should write specific objectives, only 37% said yes, while 32% responded no, and 31% had no experience from which to speak. When asked why they felt the way they did, opinions were especially strong. On the one hand, those who favored setting goals cited the opportunity to bring unity to the department in increased accountability, to improve performance, to avoid distractions, and to stimulate discussion and thought. On the other hand, those who opposed the use of formal goals mentioned that setting goals would lead to considerable dissension in the department, waste a lot of effort, create reams of useless paperwork and institute processes which would hinder good teaching rather than help it.

The survey data present three further observations on the educational process. First, sociologists rejected the behavioral approach to educational objectives, with 78% of departments agreeing with the statement, "Education cannot be reduced to a series of units to be separately mastered. It is instead a complex whole." Furthermore, within the department 75% of the respondents supported the position that objectives or goals must be set by faculty consensus. Thirdly, departments were asked to indicate the degree to which the following statement described their department, "We collect or examine data about the interest and needs of our students when we develop curriculum." Only 11% of the sample indicated this was "completely descriptive" and 33% indicated it was "generally descriptive," leaving over half who found the use of data only partially or not at all descriptive. If curriculum were a problem of social policy, sociologists would be forced to give themselves low marks on the utilization of data in planning.

In summary, sociology departments expressed a great deal of interest in specifically developed goals and objectives in the light of efforts to continually reassess their work. But, in spite of this interest, there is a general hesitancy to become very specific to establish goals and objectives which go beyond a teacher's own efforts in a single class. Furthermore, departments are not moving toward holding individual faculty accountable for setting their own teaching goals, with just slightly over a third of the departments reporting that it is either generally or completely descriptive that the department chairperson or dean meets with each faculty member to discuss his/her teaching objectives. In short, sociology departments have been cautious about setting specific goals and objectives to facilitate their curricular developments.

VII
DISCUSSION

The "tasting" of the consequence of curriculum writing in sociology has some predictable and some surprising results. Sociology departments have defined their boundaries as amorphous territories in which they share, negotiate, and compete with other departments. But despite its lack of a firm boundary, sociology feels confident of its ability to communicate the nature of sociology to students and of its place in academic institutions. Central to successful teaching is the successful development of a conceptual framework, not the work of the discipline or department, but of the individual teacher.

By and large, the average student's first, and perhaps only, contact with sociology is via a first course in which sociology is ampled. In this and in other courses, instruction in sociology still relies heavily on textbooks, readings, and conventional testing, although awareness of and experimentation with new technologies is widespread. Major revisions of curriculum are far less characteristic of a department than experimentation with teaching techniques. You "cannot tell a book by its cover," nor can you distinguish a department by its goals.

The absence of certain problems is an equally surprising result. At least from the perspective of the chair, satisfaction is more widespread in undergraduate sociology than would be expected. The lack of concern for teaching creative thinking and for mastering a body of knowledge were unexpected. The real problem may well be the lack of awareness of problems, something the survey could not measure. Nonetheless, the way to bring heightened awareness to problems is to know what the issues are, and to compare within a department how the faculty respond to issues relative to other institutions. Our purpose in describing these results, then, is met if they provide a useful basis for discussion between colleauges, within departments and the profession.

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